

"Our goal is to support our members and to help them at a time that can be difficult," said Pat Shecter, president of the local society.

While recent widows are still in mourning, they often deal with mounting paperwork involving health-care and survivors' benefits, Shecter said. For some, the process can be hard to navigate and understand, she said. "We want people to know that we're here to help."

Over the last two decades, the society has worked on behalf of military widows receiving survivors' benefits. A few years ago, members started a successful grass-roots campaign to lobby Congress to give widows and their dependents continued health coverage after age 65 through Tricare for Life, a medical insurance plan for military retirees.

"When our husbands re-enlisted, they were promised that they would get free medical care for themselves and their dependents," said Shirley Degan, a local member and national chaplain for the society. "We made sure it happened."

Degan said the society also took on Congress when it limited the amount of money widows were supposed to receive through survivor benefits. Under survivor benefit plans, military personnel could opt for their surviving dependents to get 55 percent of their retirement pay after their deaths. But a new law created by Congress limited the amount given to survivors, capping it at 35 percent after age 62 when widows became eligible for Social Security, Degan said.

Again the group lobbied against the cut and was able to get the government to restore the amount to 55 percent, though getting it to that amount is still a sore subject among members, Degan said.

Annual 5 percent increments, starting this month, are being paid each year. It's expected to be at 55 percent by 2008, Shecter said.

"By the time it's back up, a lot of our members might not be here," Shecter said of the members, who are mostly in their 70s and 80s. Still, the group goes on with political causes its members believe in.

Joining with the National Association for Uniformed Services and other organizations, the society is part of an effort to get a constitutional amendment passed that would make it illegal to desecrate the American flag. It also wants to ensure its own future. With more than 25 nationwide chapters and 4,200 members, the society is campaigning to get younger members to join. Most current members—including the 230 local members—are widows of World War II, Korean War and Vietnam War veterans.

"A lot of young women don't know we're here for them," said Marilyn Savage, a past president of the society. "They're going to need to take care of their families. And we can help them with securing what's due to them."

Ruelas, one of the chapter's youngest members, is chair-woman of the society's membership committee. She said she wants to do her part to make sure the society continues to exist. "We want to be a resource for widows, especially younger ones, who aren't familiar with the group," she said.

Though it's been two years since David's passing, Ruelas said seeing little things throughout their house makes her feel like he is still around. "It's calming to know he's here," she said. "I can feel his presence and I know I can go on."

About the society: Society of Military Widows Desert Rose Chapter 14 of Tucson is a nonprofit group affiliated with the National Association for Uniformed Services. The society is open to widows of active-duty and retired military. Call Pat Shecter at 574-5338 for an application, newsletter and member-

ship information. For more information, visit the Web site www.militarywidows.org.

COMMENDING LIFETIME TELEVISION ON THE MINISERIES "HUMAN TRAFFICKING"

HON. JUANITA MILLENDER-McDONALD

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, October 31, 2005

Ms. MILLENDER-McDONALD. Mr. Speaker, this week, Lifetime Television is airing a miniseries that can only be described as "Must See TV" for all of us in the United States Congress.

"Human Trafficking" tells a story that we cannot afford to ignore any longer. The movie depicts the plights of 4 young victims ranging from a single mother from the Czech Republic tricked into selling herself into slavery, to a 12-year-old girl from New Jersey kidnapped while on vacation with her parents. Their stories are horrific, but they are far from fantastical.

Each year upwards of a million people are trafficked within countries and across borders all over the globe. Human trafficking affects men, women and children, but women and children represent an unfortunate lion's share of trafficking victims. Selling people into forced labor and prostitution cannot be called anything other than slavery. The people and organizations that perpetrate this travesty are criminals of the lowest order and deserve to be brought to justice.

The practice of trafficking in persons must be of paramount concern to the U.S. Administration, Congress, and the international community. We cannot sit idly by while this nefarious practice continues and criminals continue to make enormous profits at the expense of innocent victims.

I want to thank Lifetime for its courage in bringing this issue to the forefront of this Nation's conscience. Aiming for similar results, I recently introduced a resolution, H. Res. 490, which encourages the United Nations to establish a commission that will look into the atrocities of human trafficking, exploitation and slavery. I hope you will all join me in support of that resolution. When we as a body and as a Nation infuse this issue with the bright light of our collective disbelief and horror that in the year 2005 the crime of slavery still afflicts our world, we will be that much closer to seeing its end in the coming years.

Lifetime, with the premier of this movie has made the necessity of our action so much more apparent and for that they deserve our commendation.

SENATE COMMITTEE MEETINGS

Title IV of Senate Resolution 4, agreed to by the Senate on February 4, 1977, calls for establishment of a system for a computerized schedule of all meetings and hearings of Senate committees, subcommittees, joint committees, and committees of conference. This title requires all such committees to notify the Office of the Senate Daily Digest—designated by the Rules Committee—of the time, place, and purpose of the meetings, when scheduled, and any cancellations or changes in the meetings as they occur.

As an additional procedure along with the computerization of this information, the Office of the Senate Daily Digest will prepare this information for printing in the Extensions of Remarks section of the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD on Monday and Wednesday of each week.

Meetings scheduled for Tuesday, November 1, 2005 may be found in the Daily Digest of today's RECORD.

MEETINGS SCHEDULED

NOVEMBER 2

- 9 a.m.
Appropriations
Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies Subcommittee
To hold hearings to examine funding needs for pandemic influenza preparedness.
SD-124
- 9:30 a.m.
Environment and Public Works
To resume hearings to examine the response to Hurricane Katrina.
SD-406
- Foreign Relations
To hold hearings to examine Avian Influenza.
SD-419
- Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs
To hold hearings to examine why the levees failed relating to Hurricane Katrina.
SD-342
- Indian Affairs
To hold an oversight hearing to examine In Re Tribal Lobbying Matters, Et Al.
SH-216
- 2 p.m.
Energy and Natural Resources
Public Lands and Forests Subcommittee
To hold hearings to examine S. 1548, to provide for the conveyance of certain Forest Service land to the city of Coffman Cove, Alaska, S. 1541, to protect, conserve, and restore public land administered by the Department of the Interior or the Forest Service and adjacent land through cooperative cost-shared grants to control and mitigate the spread of invasive species, S. 1552, to amend Public Law 97-435 to extend the authorization for the Secretary of the Interior to release certain conditions contained in a patent concerning certain land conveyed by the United States to Eastern Washington University until December 31, 2009, H.R. 482, to provide for a land exchange involving Federal lands in the Lincoln National Forest in the State of New Mexico, and S. 405, to provide for the conveyance of certain public land in Clark County, Nevada, for use as a heliport.
SD-366
- 2:30 p.m.
Commerce, Science, and Transportation
Business meeting to consider pending calendar business.
SH-216
- Judiciary
Constitution, Civil Rights and Property Rights Subcommittee
Business meeting to markup S.J. Res. 1, proposing an amendment to the Constitution of the United States relating to marriage.
SD-226
- Intelligence
To hold closed hearings to examine certain intelligence matters.
SH-219